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Or, on the contrary: "The chain begins to rust," &c. &c. Though these people often manifest great energy of character, many have committed suicide on account of disappointments in love, or of wounded honour, of which Dr. Morse relates a remarkable instance, where an Indian killed himself because he was reproached with cowardice, after his mother had suffered death for him. Many travellers speak of the extraordinary memory of the Indians; several of them relate the entire history of their people in a continuous narrative.

The Mandans and Manitaries are proud, and have a high sense of honour. If a person expresses a wish to possess some article belonging to them, he generally receives it as a present, but a present of equal, or greater value, is always looked for in return. They estimate all their effects at a very high rate, ascribing to them an imaginary and far too great value; and a trifling thing is often paid for with one or two horses. Among the articles of great value is the skin of a white buffalo cow. Fifteen florins are paid for a small ermine skin; whereas, a wolf's skin may be purchased for a small quantity of tobacco. One or two horses are frequently given for a feather cap; a horse for 100 or 150 elks' teeth, or for a handful of dentalium shells. The men are much given to indolence, when they cannot pursue their chief avocations, hunting and war. In general, the Mandans and Manitaries are not dangerous, and, though there are many rude and savage men among them, they are, on the whole, well-disposed towards the Whites: the former, especially, manifest this, and have many good and trustworthy men among them. Some of them are addicted to thieving, especially the women and children; and it is said, that many of the Manitaries, when they meet the Whites in the prairie, though they do not kill them, as they used to do, generally plunder them.

They have always free access to the forts of the trading companies; and, as at Fort Clarke, there was no separate apartment for the Indians, we were molested by them, during the whole day, in every room; nay, they often took the place of the owners, which, during the severe cold in the winter time, was quite intolerable, as they stood in front of the fire, with their large buffalo robes, and kept the warmth from coming into the apartment. They require to be always regaled, which is generally done, and it was estimated that in one year they smoked 200 lbs. of tobacco at the expense of the Company. A few among them, indeed, manifested a much greater delicacy of feeling than the mass of them, and left the dining-room when the dinner-hour approached; but only a very small proportion possessed this correct sense of propriety, for the others generally came just at our dinner time; it is true they had but little meat in the winter season, and fared but badly. Disputes and quarrels are very rare among them; but duels are frequent; and revenge for blood is still exercised.

Many of them are particularly cleanly in their persons, and bathe daily, both in winter and summer; their hands, however, are often smeared with colours and fat, nay, sometimes the whole body is bedaubed. The women are, in general, less cleanly, particularly their hands,

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778 Many instruments used by the Whites, especially mathematical, are a great medicine, or charm, in their eyes, because they do not comprehend the use of them. Thus, the Indian women were frequently embarrassed when we looked at them through a telescope, because they believed that we had the power of penetrating their inmost thoughts, and of discovering their past and future actions.

805 The division of time, especially that of the year into months, is pretty conformable to nature; they count the years by winters, and say so many winters have passed since such an event. They are able to reckon the winters either by numbers, or on their fingers, for their numerals are very complete.

1. The month of the seven cold days, answering to our January.
2. The pairing month—February.
3. The month of weak eyes—March.
4. The month of game. Some call it the month of the wild geese. It is likewise often called the month of the breaking-up of the ice.
5. The month in which maize is sown, or the month of flowers—May.
6. The month of ripe service berries.
7. The month of ripe cherries.
8. The month of ripe plums.
9. The month of ripe maize.
10. The month of the falling leaves.
11. The month in which the rivers freeze.
12. The month of slight frost.

Here and there other names are given to the months, but the above are the most common.

461 224 The chief occupations of the Indians, besides adorning and painting their persons, looking in the glass, smoking, eating, and sleeping, are the chase and war, and these fill up a great part of their time. The principal beast of chase is the buffalo, or, rather, the buffalo cow. The men generally go hunting in a body, on horseback, in order to be the more secure against a superior force of their enemies. 492 The equipments of their horses are much like those of the Blackfeet, and their saddle resembles the Hungarian; though, now, they sometimes obtain saddles from the Whites, which they line and ornament with red and blue cloth. In riding, they never leave hold of their whip, the handle of which is made of wood, and not of elk's horn, as among the more western nations. They never wear spurs. 224 In the summer time, if the herds of buffaloes are dispersed to great distances in the prairie, the chase, of course, requires more time and exertion; but in winter, when they approach the Missouri, and seek shelter in the woods, a great number are

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LETTER—No. 12.

MANDAN VILLAGE, UPPER MISSOURI.

In my last, I gave some account of the village, and the customs, and appearances of this strange people,—and I will now proceed to give further details on that subject.

I have this morning, perched myself upon the top of one of the earth-covered lodges, which I have before described, and having the whole village beneath and about me (PLATE 47), with its sachems—its warriors—its dogs—and its horses in motion—its medicines (or mysteries) and scalp-poles waving over my head—its piquets—its green fields and prairies, and river in full view, with the din and bustle of the thrilling panorama that is about me. I shall be able, I hope, to give some sketches more to the life than I could have done from any effort of recollection.

I said that the lodges or wigwams were covered with earth—were of forty or sixty feet in diameter, and so closely grouped that there was but just room enough to walk and ride between them,—that they had a door by which to enter them, and a hole in the top for the admission of light, and for the smoke to escape,—that the inmates were at times grouped upon their tops in conversations and other amusements, &c.; and yet you know not exactly how they look, nor what is the precise appearance of the strange world that is about me. There is really a newness and rudeness in every thing that is to be seen. There are several hundred houses or dwellings about me, and they are purely unique—they are all covered with dirt—the people are all red, and yet distinct from all other red folks I have seen. The horses are wild—every dog is a wolf—the whole moving mass are strangers to me: the living, in everything, carry an air of intractable wildness about them, and the dead are not buried, but dried upon scaffolds.

The groups of lodges around me present a very curious and pleasing appearance, resembling in shape (more nearly than anything else I can compare them to) so many potash-kettles inverted. On the tops of these are to be seen groups standing and reclining, whose wild and picturesque appearance it would be difficult to describe. Stern warriors, like statues, standing in dignified groups, wrapped in their painted robes, with their heads decked and plumed with quills of the war-eagle; extending their long arms to

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461 the east or the west, the scenes of their battles, which they are recounting over to each other. In another direction, the wooing lover, softening the heart of his fair Taih-nah-tai-a with the notes of his simple lute. On other lodges, and beyond these, groups are engaged in games of the "moccasin," or the "platter." Some are to be seen manufacturing robes and dresses, and others, fatigued with amusements or occupations, have stretched their limbs to enjoy the luxury of sleep, whilst basking in the sun. With all this wild and varied medley of living beings are mixed their dogs, which seem to be so near an Indian's heart, as almost to constitute a material link of his existence.

361 778 In the centre of the village is an open space, or public area, of 150 feet in diameter, and circular in form, which is used for all public games and festivals, shews and exhibitions; and also for their "annual religious ceremonies," which are soon to take place, and of which I shall hereafter give some account. The lodges around this open space front in, with their doors towards the centre; and in the middle of this circle stands an object of great religious veneration, as I am told, on account of the importance it has in the conduction of these annual religious rites.

778 This object is in form of a large hogshead, some eight or ten feet high, made of planks and hoops, containing within it some of their choicest medicines or mysteries, and religiously preserved unhacked or scratched, as a symbol of the "Big Canoe," as they call it.

One of the lodges fronting on this circular area, and facing this strange object of their superstition, is called the "Medicine Lodge," or council house. It is in this sacred building that these wonderful ceremonies, in commemoration of the flood, take place. I am told by the Traders that the cruelties of these scenes are frightful and abhorrent in the extreme; and that this huge wigwam, which is now closed, has been built exclusively for this grand celebration. I am every day reminded of the near approach of the season for this strange affair, and as I have not yet seen any thing of it, I cannot describe it; I know it only from the relations of the Traders who have witnessed parts of it; and their descriptions are of so extraordinary a character, that I would not be willing to describe until I can see for myself, —which will, in all probability, be in a few days.

351 778 In ranging the eye over the village from where I am writing, there is presented to the view the strangest mixture and medley of unintelligible trash (independant of the living beings that are in motion), that can possibly be imagined. On the roofs of the lodges, besides the groups of living, are buffaloes' skulls, skin canoes, pots and pottery; sleds and sledges—and suspended on poles, erected some twenty feet above the doors of their wigwams, are displayed in a pleasant day, the scalps of warriors, preserved as trophies; and thus proudly exposed as evidence of their warlike deeds. In other parts are raised on poles the warriors' pure and whitened shields and quivers, with medicine-bags attached; and here and there a sacrifice of red

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LETTER—No. 18.

MANDAN VILLAGE, UPPER MISSOURI.

461 535 THE Mandans, like all other tribes, lead lives of idleness and leisure; and of course, devote a great deal of time to their sports and amusements, of which they have a great variety. Of these, dancing is one of the principal, and may be seen in a variety of forms: such as the buffalo dance, the boasting dance, the begging dance, the scalp dance, and a dozen other kinds of dances, all of which have their peculiar characters and meanings or objects.

535 533 198 These exercises are exceedingly grotesque in their appearance, and to the eye of a traveller who knows not their meaning or importance, they are an uncouth and frightful display of starts, and jumps, and yelps, and jarring gutturals, which are sometimes truly terrifying. But when one gives them a little attention, and has been lucky enough to be initiated into their mysterious meaning, they become a subject of the most intense and exciting interest. Every dance has its peculiar step, and every step has its meaning; every dance also has its peculiar song, and that is so intricate and mysterious oftentimes, that not one in ten of the young men who are dancing and singing it, know the meaning of the song which they are chanting over. None but the medicine-men are allowed to understand them; and even they are generally only initiated into these secret arcana, on the payment of a liberal stipend for their tuition, which requires much application and study. There is evidently a set song and sentiment for every dance, for the songs are perfectly measured, and sung in exact time with the beat of the drum; and always with an uniform and invariable set of sounds and expressions, which clearly indicate certain sentiments, which are expressed by the voice, though sometimes not given in any known language whatever.

They have other dances and songs which are not so mystified, but which are sung and understood by every person in the tribe, being sung in their own language, with much poetry in them, and perfectly metred, but without rhyme. On these subjects I shall take another occasion to say more; and will for the present turn your attention to the style and modes in which some of these curious transactions are conducted.

535 MY ears have been almost continually ringing since I came here, with the din of yelping and beating of the drums; but I have for several days

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LETTER—No. 20.

MANDAN VILLAGE, *UPPER MISSOURI.*

This day has been one of unusual mirth and amusement amongst the Mandans, and whether on account of some annual celebration or not, I am as yet unable to say, though I think such is the case; for these people have many days which, like this, are devoted to festivities and amusements.

Their lives, however, are lives of idleness and ease, and almost all their days and hours are spent in innocent amusements. Amongst a people who have no office hours to attend to—no professions to study, and of whom but very little time is required in the chase, to supply their families with food, it would be strange if they did not practice many games and amusements, and also become exceedingly expert in them.

I have this day been a spectator of games and plays until I am fatigued with looking on; and also by lending a hand, which I have done; but with so little success as only to attract general observation, and as generally to excite the criticisms and laughter of the squaws and little children.

I have seen a fair exhibition of their archery this day, in a favourite amusement which they call the "*game of the arrow*" (see PLATE 60), where the young men who are the most distinguished in this exercise, assemble on the prairie at a little distance from the village, and having paid, each one, his "entrance-fee," such as a shield, a robe, a pipe, or other article, step forward in turn, shooting their arrows into the air, endeavouring to see who can get the greatest number flying in the air at one time, thrown from the same bow. For this, the number of eight or ten arrows are clenched in the left hand with the bow, and the first one which is thrown is elevated to such a degree as will enable it to remain the longest time possible in the air, and while it is flying, the others are discharged as rapidly as possible; and he who succeeds in getting the greatest number up at once, is "best," and takes the goods staked.

In looking on at this amusement, the spectator is surprised; not at the great distance to which the arrows are actually sent; but at the quickness of fixing them on the string, and discharging them in succession; which is no doubt, the result of great practice, and enables the most expert

832 repair to the cornfields and are soon followed by the young men,
834 who enjoy their company and take every liberty. The young men then return, and, if no hunting party offers, pass the day on
461 the tops of the huts, sleeping in the sun, or strolling from hut to
526 hut, eating corn and smoking Missourie tobacco. At other times they amuse themselves by running races either on foot or horseback, and performing warlike manoeuvres; they have also a favorite game which occupies much of their time.

512 [328]...this is the first work performed by the women in the
515 morning after having paid their devoirs to their lovers and washed themselves in the Missourie. ...every family being provided
415 with a brass or copper kettle for the purpose of cooking flesh.
177 Whether this proceeds from superstition or not I cannot pretend to
771 say, but they assured me that any kind of flesh cooked in those
574 earthen pots would cause them to split. One or more of the largest kind is constantly boiling prepared corn and beans, and all who come in are welcome to help themselves to as much as they can eat of the contents.

231 .....Early this morning our young hostler took our horses to feed
437 in the meadow but never allowed them to be for a moment out of
648 his sight, lest the Assiniboines or other enemies might steal them. We purchased sweet corn, beans, meal, and various other trifles, for which we paid in ammunition, beads, and tobacco.

439 [329] It would have been in vain for us to attempt to prevail upon anyone in this village to ferry us over; for, as long as a stranger has any property, they wish him to trade all he brings in the first village he enters, every village being ambitious of getting as many
439 European articles as they can, [330] particularly arms and ammuni-
609 tion. This is good policy; for, notwithstanding they are so near each other, and live in amity, they are not free from jealousy, and have
578 often had serious misunderstandings, sometimes ending in the death
869 of an individual, and nearly occasioning civil war. They have also to guard against their natural enemies, the Sioux, who are at no great distance. The Pawnees, also, with whom the Mandanes formerly lived in the same villages, are now their most inveterate enemies. Arms and ammunition are, therefore, necessary articles, and every-one has a stock of ball and powder laid up in case of emergency.

675 We packed up our purchases, and gave them into the care of the
673 landlord. These people are much given to thieving, but in the hut
[577] in which a stranger is lodged, his property may be left in perfect security; none dare touch it, as the master conceives his honor concerned in whatever is placed under his immediate protection. Out of doors, if they can pick your pocket, or pilfer any article,